



Brandenburg, Ky.

Photograph by Billy Davis, III

customer trouble calls, was in business prior to the storm. Trouble Department Foreman Harry Hottel was bracing for a record number of calls. They did not come.

"We've taken as many calls in two hours after a good storm as we did all the time the storm board was open this time," he said.

In 133 hours and 40 minutes of consecutive operation, the storm board staff fielded only 10,485 calls. This compared with 30,902 calls in 93 hours and 15 minutes after the Valentine's Day ice storm of 1970, the most recent major disaster met and overcome by the company.

"There were a couple of reasons, I'm sure. One was that telephone service also was out in many areas of the city. Another is that the people simply realized that a lot of other people were in the same plight, or worse," Hottel reasoned. "They knew they probably wouldn't have service restored soon even if they did call in."

The storm board was one of several L G & E means of communication with customers and with others engaged in restoring Louisville as a functioning community after the storm.

Rolling Fields Subdivision



Rolling Fields off Brownsboro Road



Copyright © 1974, The Courier-Journal & The Louisville Times
Reprinted by permission

Communication with the public at large, through the media, was the task of H. Curtis Craig, Vice President, Sales and Public Relations. He headed for the Trouble Department upon hearing of the storm's severity and was on the job or on 24-hour call at temporary headquarters in a downtown hotel until the weekend, when he got his first chance to assess damage to his own home.

Communication with customers unable to report damage because of telephone disruptions and with authorities directing emergency operations was a critical factor in the early hours of the cleanup effort.

Vern Whitehouse, Manager-Industrial Relations, provided L G & E's link with other utilities and agencies at the emergency Civil Defense headquarters set up at Louisville's City Hall.

Six miles away, at an emergency command post set up in Broadway Baptist Church on the edge of one of the areas of greatest destruction, Fred Wright played a comparable role for L G & E. Wright is Staff Engineer-Operating Department.

"There was no telephone communication in the area," Wright recalled. "I had a company truck with a radio to communicate with the Trouble Department. Moving traffic through the area was almost impossible. People would walk or ride bicycles to the church to report leaking gas lines or other dangerous situations."

He dispatched electricians with county works gangs to isolate and de-energize hot wires, and advised gas crews of suspected leaks.

"It was an education process to me," Wright said. The education lasted nearly 20 consecutive hours before Wright was relieved and able to get some rest.

As the point man of the L G & E team working out of Civil Defense headquarters, Whitehouse had a direct telephone line to the Trouble Department. The phone had been installed earlier by L G & E to meet emergencies. Whitehouse provided information for govern-

ment officials concerned about progress of restoring power, and passed on crisis information to the Trouble Department.

Whitehouse and a team of four other L G & E employees rotated at that assignment until 9:30 p.m. Saturday, when the most serious crises were considered in hand.

*"... My wife and I and our nine-year-old daughter had just gotten into bed under every blanket we could round up. The thermometer in the house was reading 33 degrees and I had just commented on how cold it must be for those utility repairmen working out there in the dark and rain. Just then the lights snapped on, the furnace started to heat and I guess we let out a cheer for knowing we were back to normal again..."**

Right after the tornado hit, the load dispatcher's office began the juggling act that often follows a major storm: Trying to locate alternate routes to move power from its source to its customers.

But this time, it was more of a blind juggling act.

"The substations are operated remotely from this office through supervisory controls that use our own private telephone cable system," Joe Warren explained. "The storm took down those cables, too."

The men in the load dispatcher's office knew which substations were out, but they weren't able to re-energize many of them by remote control, and they didn't know the nature of the damage.

"There simply was no immediate way to tell whether they had the capability to go back into operation," Warren said.

Telephone lines between his office and the Trouble Department and two-way radio communication between the Trouble Department and field crews remained busy for hours as the business of manually checking each substation began.

The crews picked their way through streets jammed with cars and debris, and neighborhood by neighborhood, the lights began to go on as darkness closed over the scenes of destruction Wednesday night. Service was restored to some 64,000 customers by about 8 p.m. They were the lucky ones.

"As an appreciative customer I want to express the admiration that my wife and I have for the terrific job that the people of Louisville Gas & Electric Company have done in coping with the severe problems created by the tornado. We have seen some of the crews work-



Frankfort Avenue